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AFGHANISTAN HITS SEVERAL SITES IN PAKISTAN IN RETALIATION

Afghanistan's defence ministry said on Saturday that its forces hit several sites inside Pakistan in retaliation for airstrikes earlier this week

19 PAKISTANI SOLDIERS KILLED, CLAIMS MEDIA

Taliban defence ministry said its forces targeted Pakistani points that served as centres and hideouts for malicious elements and their supporters who organised and coordinated attacks in Afghanistan. Media outlet *Hurriyet Daily News* citing ministry officials said that 19 Pakistani troops and three Afghan civilians were killed in the assaults | PTI

AFGHANS IN KHOST CITY STAGE PROTEST

- Earlier this week, Pakistan's attack on Afghanistan had killed 46 people in airstrikes near the border in Paktika. Pakistan accused the Taliban of not doing enough to combat cross-border militant activity
- In Khost city, hundreds of Afghan citizens on Saturday protested the Pakistani attack, calling for accountability for civilian deaths

383

PAKISTANI SOLDIERS KILLED IN VARIOUS CLASHES IN 2024

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

President Droupadi Murmu pays her last respects to former prime minister Manmohan Singh during the state funeral at Nigambodh Ghat in New Delhi on Saturday | PTI

Cremation over, political row over memorial isn't

Congress, BJP slugfest over last rites at Nigambodh Ghat in Delhi

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

HOURS after the cremation of Manmohan Singh on Saturday, political tussle over a memorial for him escalated after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused the government of "total insult" of the former prime minister since his last rites were performed at Delhi's Nigambodh Ghat instead of a designated burial site.

In a post on X, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha said, "The great son of Mother India and the first Prime Minister of the Sikh community, Dr Manmohan Singh ji, has been insulted by the present government by performing his last rites today at the Nigam Bodh Ghat."

Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, too, attacked the government saying the Centre should have thought 'beyond politics and narrow-mindedness' in this matter. "By not providing an adequate place for the cremation of former PM Dr Manmohan Singh, the government has not done justice to the dignity of the post of former PM, the personality of Manmohan Singh, his legacy and the self-respecting Sikh community," she wrote on X.

In his pushback, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra lit into Rahul for politicising the issue, saying the Centre has already written to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Dr Singh's family conveying the Union Cabinet's decision to allocate space for the memorial. A government statement said the funeral could be held as the process of setting up a trust and allotting land for the memorial could take a while.

Kharge had on Friday written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting to hold the funeral at a place where his memorial could be built.

BJP president J P Nadda, too condemned Rahul and Kharge for politics in the name of memorial. "When the entire nation mourns the demise, the Congress is busy turning this moment of grief into an opportunity to fulfill their political agenda," Nadda alleged.

Congress leader K C Venugopal hit back at Nadda and the BJP, alleging they crossed all boundaries of decency. The "shoddy arrangements and the conduct of the cremation were deeply insulting", he charged. P9

> Dr Manmohan Singh deserves our highest respect and a memorial. The government should have shown respect to this great son of the country and his proud community — Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

FINAL JOURNEY TO NIGAMBODH GHAT

Singh's body, placed in a flower-bedecked casket and carriage, was taken from his 3, Motilal Nehru residence in Delhi to the Congress HQ. Final journey then started from the AICC office to the Nigambodh Ghat, where the procession reached around 11.30 am

ELDEST DAUGHTER LIGHTS PYRE

The funeral pyre was lit by Manmohan Singh's eldest daughter, Upinder Singh, at Nigambodh Ghat. Priests and family members recited religious hymns from the holy *Gurbani*. Chants of *Satnam Waheguru* filled the air, as Singh was cremated

BHUTAN KING PAYS TRIBUTES TO EX-PM

Security forces gave a salute of three volleys of small arms. Buglers sounded the *Last Post*. King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and the foreign minister of Mauritius, Dhananjay Ramful, were among the foreign dignitaries who paid tributes to Singh

Kashmiriyat on display amid first big snowfall

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

PEOPLE in the Valley showed what *Kashmiriyat* is all about by opening their homes and mosques to tourists stranded at different places following the season's first major snowfall.

The Valley witnessed the season's first major snowfall on Friday. While the plains had moderate to heavy snowfall, the upper reaches, including tourist resorts of Gulmarg in north Kashmir, Sonamarg in central Kashmir and Pahalgam in south Kashmir experienced heavy snowfall.

As a result, tourists were stranded at many places, including at Gund in central Kashmir, Tangmarg in north Kashmir and Pahalgam and other areas in south Kashmir.

Locals rose to the occasion in the Gund area of Ganderbal district by offering shelter to the stranded tourists at their homes and mosques. They were also provided food and heating facilities. At the Jamia Masjid in Gund, the locals burnt the traditional *hamam* at night to ensure warmth for the tourists accommodated in the mosque.

Videos of the tourists spending the night in the mosque and at the houses of locals have gone viral on social media. "We stayed the night in the mosque in Gund. The locals have given new life to us by providing us food and heating arrangements in the mosque. People here are very hospitable. They looked after us very well," said a group of tourists from Punjab.

"We are extremely thankful to the locals. The tourists are safe here and no harm can come their way. People should visit Kashmir which is paradise on earth," they added.

Besides, hotelier Mohd Altaf Shah provided free accommodation to tourists at his hotel, The Sultan, at Kullan-Rezan in Sonamarg from 2.30 am.

A visitor takes photos at Dal Lake after the season's first snowfall in Srinagar

RAPE, HONEY TRAP CASE: 2K-PAGE CHARGESHEET AGAINST MUNIRATHNA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Special Investigation Team (SIT) on Friday submitted a 2,481-page chargesheet in the rape and honey trap case registered against Rajarajeshwari Nagar BJP MLA Munirathna to the special court here.

A 40-year-old social worker filed a complaint against the MLA at Kaggalipura police station on September 18.

The chargesheet alleges that the MLA used women living with HIV to honey trap his political rivals.

Ayyan Reddy, police inspector attached to Hebbagodi police station, has been named in the chargesheet for allegedly helping the MLA in criminal conspiracies.

The SIT has mentioned 146 witnesses and 850 documents as evidence in the chargesheet. Of the 146 witnesses, statements of eight have been recorded before a magistrate.

Several videos allegedly used by Munirathna to honey trap his rivals have been recovered. Apart from Munirathna and Iyyan Reddy, MLA's associates Srinivas P and Sudhakar R have been named in the chargesheet.

The SIT is investigating three cases — two registered at Vyalikaval police station in Bengaluru and one at Kaggalipura police station in Ramanagara district.

On November 30, the SIT submitted a 590-page chargesheet against the MLA for his alleged casteist slurs against a former corporator.

6 Roerich works for Delhi expo to mark his 150th birth anniv

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

SIX paintings of renowned Russian painter and philosopher Nicholas K Roerich were moved from Bengaluru's Chitrakala Parishath (CKP) to New Delhi's National Gallery for Modern Art (NGMA) last week.

They will be part of the works on display to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Roerich. The six paintings — part of the Himalayan series — were hand-picked by curators of NGMA and CKP.

This is the first time that Nicholas Roerich's paintings have been taken out of the gallery here, BL Shankar, CKP president, told TNSE.

CKP houses 36 paintings of Nicholas Roerich and 63 by his son Svetoslav Roerich. Of them, six of Nicholas' paintings have been sent to New Delhi.

"They will be on display at NGMA for three months from January 15. A gallery at CKP will display 35 unique paintings of the Himalayan series from mid-January," Shankar said.

Shankar said the CKP gallery, which was closed for renovation, is being opened after a long time. Some of Roerich's paintings had to be restored.

CONTINUED ON: P2

Kolar farmer distributes bananas free as prices crash

V VELAYUDHAM @ Kolar

A farmer, who had cultivated banana on three acres of land, harvested the crop on Saturday and distributed it to people free of cost owing to the fall in prices of the produce.

KY Ganesh Gowda of Kotekanahalli in Kolar district took this step after local wholesale merchants and fruit dealers offered him only Rs 10 a kg of banana.

Gowda told TNSE that last year, he took a loan of Rs 2 lakh from Vadagur Society and planted 2006 Elakki banana suckers on his land a few months ago. In all, he spent Rs 4.5 lakh on the crop.

During Ganesh Chaturthi, Deepavali and Varamahalakshmi festivals, local dealers purchased bananas from him for Rs 60 a kg and they, in turn, sold them for Rs 100 a kg. Although he tried to sell 2,000 kg of bananas this week, the buyers did not offer him remunerative prices. As the crop was ready for harvest, he could not wait anymore, he said.

"With no other go, I engaged some labourers and harvested the crop and distributed it to people of Kotekanahalli and nearby villages free of cost," he said.

Gowda said that he took to banana cultivation after incurring losses by growing tomatoes last year. "I have spent Rs 35,000 on harvesting the crop and preparing the land for another crop. Apart from clearing the loan, I have to spend money on raising a new crop," he said.

According to sources, many farmers have taken up banana cultivation in the district, expecting remunerative prices during Sankranthi next month.

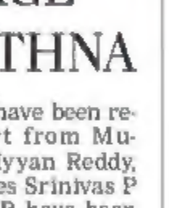
Banana stalks on KY Ganesh Gowda's land at Kotekanahalli in Kolar district | EXPRESS

Putin says sorry for Azerbaijani plane crash

AGENCIES

VLADIMIR Putin obliquely admitted on Saturday that Russian air defence had by mistake shot down an Azerbaijani Airlines plane that tried to land in Grozny before crashing, breaking the Kremlin's silence as speculation mounted over Russian culpability.

The Russian leader called his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev, apologising for the shocking error of judgement in Russian airspace, while stopping short of saying Russian air defence had shot it down.



The phone call between the allies came three days after the plane flying from Baku to Grozny crashed in Kazakhstan, killing 38 people of 67 onboard. President Putin told Aliyev the plane had tried to land in Grozny "several times."

"During this time, Grozny, (the town of) Mozdok and Vladikavkaz were being attacked by Ukrainian combat drones and Russian air defence was repelling these attacks," Putin said.

The European Union called for a swift, independent international investigation. P11

FOURTH TEST

Reddy, steady, go: Emotional hundred saves India at MCG

GOMESH S @ Melbourne

IT was tense. It was emotional. The scenes had all the ingredients of a blockbuster Tollywood movie. The protagonist on the field was plying his trade. Enacting one of India's greatest fightbacks. The celebrations too had sprinkling of movies.

Nitish Kumar Reddy first imitated the famous gesture from the movie *Pushpa* after completing his fifty and later when he reached his maiden Test hundred it was Bahubali scene. India were still on the ropes, but thanks to Reddy and Washington Sundar, India can at least breathe with ease at 358 for 9 in reply to Australia's first innings' 474.

In the stands were his family members sobbing. Father Mutyala Reddy and his wife were in attendance. Sometime later, Mutyala, his wife and daughter were waiting eagerly for the hotel door to open. Just as the door opened and the 21-year-old centurion emerged, Nitish's mum embraced her son. Even though she tried to control, his sister hugged him saying, "so proud, so happy."

The most emotional moment was that of Mutyala who buried his face in Nitish's shoulders and cried. He has sacrificed a lot. Even gave up his job so that he could ferry his son from practice to home. He even faced criticism for not having a job. But he had faith in Nitish. As the father kissed his son and hugged him tight in the video shared by BCCI.tv, they lived a dream. The Andhra all-rounder (from Vizag), with his unbeaten 105, saved the day for India.

It was MSK Prasad, former India selector, who spotted him in the early 2010s. He used to be a top-order batter bowling seam-up for Andhra age-group cricket. If Prasad played his part, Hanuma Vihari, (2021 Border Gavaskar Trophy team-member), too had a hand in helping Nitish make his state debut as a teenager. "Vihari always came forward and groomed him. I feel that Vihari has got the knack of supporting the right talent," Prasad tells this daily.

Vihari credits the youngster and his family for what he has done. "I always thought he would be playing at this level. But coming so soon and being able to perform in Australia is unbelievable. I felt really emotional today," Vihari said. P13